

**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held
on 22 March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village
Hall**



Present.

Councillors P Smith (Chairman), R. Bruges, S. Chown, J. Hailey, M. Kasasian, C. McGarvey, W. Scott, C. Wade and the Clerk, Roger Coleman.

Wiltshire Council, Cllr. J Seed attended (Part-time).

There were forty-six members of the public present initially.

1. Apologies.

There were no apologies. All councillors were present.

2. Declaration of Interests.

There were no interests declared.

3. Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 15 February 2023.

The Council **resolved** that the minutes were a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

4. Wiltshire Council Report.

Cllr Seed gave the following report:

Greenacres Site.

Pressure continues to be exerted on Wiltshire Council to resolve the issue of enforcing existing planning conditions.

Somerset Arms/Post Office Closure.

Wiltshire council financial support may be available to assist in meeting Council Tax/Business Rate commitments.

In view of the value of The Somerset Arms to the Semington community, consideration could be given to registering the Public House as an 'Asset of Community Value'.

Wessex Close Play Area.

The existing Waste Bin could be moved to a new site and Wiltshire Council will continue to empty it. However, a new bin would not be included on the existing 'emptying rota'.

Planning Development.

Following the very successful 'Joint Surgery' with Michelle Donelan MP held at the Village Hall recently she had subsequently organised a Teams meeting with Michael Gove MP (the 'Levelling Up' Secretary of State) and had raised the issue of Semington suffering from a large number of residential planning applications because of the failure of Wiltshire Council to have an agreed 5-year land supply.

Cllr. Scott enquired about the relationship between the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the proposed 'Levelling-Up' legislation. Cllr. Seed replied stating that the former would be the policy document and the latter would contain guidelines for the NPPF.

In answer to Cllr. Bruges, Cllr. Seed stated that there was no further information regarding the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera that may be available and could be used to 'police' the No Entry Bus Gate. Cllr. Bruges commented that notwithstanding the current restrictions, the unrestricted use of the Bus Gate would be beneficial for a small number of nearby residents.

Cllr. Seed confirmed that a bid for the ANPR camera should be made to the Local Highways and Footpath Improvement Group (LHFIG). However, the cost of the camera needs to be obtained and details obtained of its use e.g. enforcement and subsequent data processing and analysis. It was confirmed that the next LHFIG is to be held in June.

5. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman stated that there were no additional matters to report that were not covered by the Agenda.

6. Community and Communication.

a. The Chairman and councillors remarked that they were appreciative of the large number of parishioners attending the meeting this evening and acknowledged that the closure of the Somerset Arms Public House on 24 March 2023, and the subsequent loss of the Post Office, had prompted such a response and were matters that concerned them greatly. The Chairman thanked parishioners for their various contributions to the discussions during the Public Participation that preceded the Parish Council meeting. The Chairman, supported by councillors, confirmed that the Parish Council greatly valued the Public House and the Post Office as key facilities within Semington and that steps should be taken to ensure their survival. The Parish Council **resolved** to take the following actions:

- To register the Somerset Arms with Wiltshire Council as an 'Asset of Community Value'. This would commence the process of protecting the Somerset Arms as a community asset and would enable the community to take steps to help secure its future, including the option to put in a bid for it – subject to agreement from the present owners. Cllr. Scott agreed to take the necessary action with Wiltshire Council.
- Cllr Bruges agreed to contact the Letting Agent and the Company that owns the Public House to explore whether there was a way to allow it to remain open as a Public House.

The Parish Council confirmed its full support for the actions to be taken with the aim to secure the future of The Somerset Arms.

It was also agreed that the Village Hall Social Club might be able to provide a welcoming alternative for community clubs and ex-pub customers following the closure of the Somerset Arms. Cllr. Wade agreed to talk to the Village Hall Management Committee to explore whether and how it could be promoted. Cllrs, Bruges, Smith and McGarvey offered to assist Cllr. Wade, if necessary.

Notwithstanding these actions, the Parish Council, with the clear support of all members of the public present, **resolved** to thank the present publican, John Adams and his dedicated staff for such sterling service to the village, especially during the COVID Lockdowns.

The Chairman stated that the Post Office is presently housed within The Somerset Arms and the closure of the Public House meant that the Post Office would also close. Councillors acknowledged that new premises would need to be found for the Post Office and a return of the Post Office to the Village Hall was favoured but uncertain because of the current lack of

space. Cllr. Smith agreed to discuss this option with the Village Hall Management Committee.

b. Cllr. Chown stated that there was nothing to report in respect of the website.

c. In the absence of any adverse comments from the original contributors to the publication 'Semington – Past and Present' the Parish Council **resolved** to digitise the publication and to make it available on the website. A nominal cost of £45 plus postage was agreed.

7. Recreation and Wellbeing.

a. Cllr. Wade reported that the transfer of the Allotment Site to the Parish Council was well in hand with details of the transfer having been supplied by Newland Homes Ltd, including a plan and details of the site He commented that he had prepared a detailed specification of the proposed transfer that had been sent to Newland Homes Ltd and added that Forrester Sylvester Mackett (Solicitors) continues to be fully engaged in this matter. He stated that a contentious point was the ownership of the allotment parking spaces and that Newland Homes Ltd had misinterpreted the wording in the associated s106 Agreement. He was confident that this would be resolved.

b. See (a) above.

c. Cllr. Wade stated that he had prepared a Draft Tenancy Agreement for potential allotment holders.

d. Cllr. Chown reported that following a recent 'Team Meeting' event some twelve persons had registered an interest in creating a Wessex Close Play Area Group and that notes of that meeting had been sent to all councillors. She also gave details of possible Play Area Inspections training courses that she had researched.

e. Cllr. Chown stated that she required answers to a number of questions regarding the responsibilities of the Parish Council if the ownership/maintenance of the Wessex Close Play Area is transferred from Wiltshire Council to the Parish Council by means of an Asset Transfer. She agreed to send details of the answers from Wiltshire Council to all councillors. The Council **resolved** that agreement by each Council member to the answers provided would have to be communicated to the Chairman (Cllr. Smith) by email and if a majority of councillors were in favour then he (Cllr. Smith) would inform the Clerk who would then inform Wiltshire Council that an Asset Transfer was required.

f. Cllr. Bruges gave a full report on the proposed celebrations for the King's Coronation on 6 May 2023 and Cllr. Chown provided a similar report for the 'Volunteer Day' on Monday 8 May 2023. Following a request, the Council agreed that a flower display in the church to celebrate the Coronation would be appropriate and **resolved** that a sum of £300 be allocated to this project. Councillors added a caveat to this resolution: the £300 should only be spent on locally sourced flowers.

g. The Clerk reported that had had a lengthy conversation with Paul Cosh (South West Ambulance Service) – SWAS - regarding the Defibrillator contract which will run out in May 2023. He stated that the new contract would run from May 2023 for 4 years - cost £1800 (for the 4 years). A new cabinet would be included (apparently an improved design) at no cost but the PC would have to pay an electrician to install it – it was a 'like for like' replacement. The Clerk commented that the cost of the 4 year contract in FY15/16 was £1600 and in FY19/20 was £2160!

The Clerk questioned 'Who is the 'Custodian' i.e. the person(s) who regularly checks it and sends the return to SWAS?

The Council, after a short discussion, **resolved** to renew the contract at a cost of £1800.

8. Environment and Streetscene.

a. Rights of Way.

Cllr. Scott reported that he had had several exchanges of correspondence with Wiltshire Council regarding the conduct and the results of the SEMI9a/HILP22/10 'Cycleway' Safety Audit and associated Report – both of which displayed significant failings. He stated that the answers to his questions to date from Wiltshire Council did not address the issues raised by the Parish Council and that he will continue to seek clarification from Wiltshire Council.

b. Cllr. Hailey gave a full report on the progress to date of undertaking tree planting in support of the Queen's Canopy project. She explained that Wiltshire Council had provided her with additional forms for completion that indicated that any land where tree planting is to take place would be transferred to the Parish Council and that any Wiltshire Council maintenance of the area in question would cease. Councillors commented that this appeared to be a new arrangement – contrary to that which had been the case in the past – and it implied a transfer of responsibilities and liabilities which the Parish Council may not wish to accept. The Parish Council agreed to delay this project until the legal position was clarified. Cllr. Hailey expressed her disappointment regarding this delay and added that the locations for tree planting and the species of trees had been agreed and the granting of permission for the tree planting by Wiltshire Council which had been anticipated was now in jeopardy.

c. The Chairman reported that the Parish Council Litter Pick held on Saturday 11 March 2023 was very successful and the Chairman thanked all those individuals (councillors and parishioners) involved. The Chairman stated that additional Litter Pick equipment was required for future such Litter Picks. The Council **resolved** to allocate a budget of £150 for this additional equipment.

Cllr. Scott stated that a s106 Agreement in respect of planning application PL/2022/01367 has allocated £3800 for public rights of way improvements and that he is attempting to receive confirmation from Wiltshire Council that this money will be used to improve those rights of way in Semington.

The Chairman stated that following his enquiries only Wiltshire Council has the authority to empty 'dog waste' bins and he would wish dog walkers to identify locations where such bins are required so that he can make the necessary approaches to Wiltshire Council.

The Clerk reported that the order for two new Noticeboards have been placed and that an initial deposit of £549 had been paid.

9. Transport and Traffic.

Cllr. Hailey observed that that the local bus service had a very limited timetable and restricted the ability of parishioners without their own transport to leave the village in the evenings and Sundays for recreational or social purposes. She questioned whether action could be taken to improve this bus service. The Chairman responded that the present 'Link' scheme may provide a solution.

10. Planning and Development.

a. The council noted the status of extant planning applications thus:

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|---|----------|
| PL/2022/01367 | Land off St Georges Road, Semington | Residential development of 18 Dwellings with associated works including vehicular access and parking. | Approved |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|---|----------|

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---------|
| PL/2022/09397 Outline planning permission: All matters reserved | Land south of Pound Lane, Semington, BA14 6JP | Residential development of up to 30 dwellings (of which 30% will be affordable) with associated car parking, access, internal roads, public open space, landscaping, drainage and other associated infrastructure. | Pending |
| PL/2023/00579 LBC Steven Sims | Church Farm, Church Street, Semington, BA14 6JS | Rebuilding of existing barn to form the double garage previously approved under Listed Building ref: PL/2021/09522 | Pending |
| PL/2023/00477 Plan. App. Steven Sims | Church Farm, Church Street, Semington, BA14 6JS | Rebuilding of existing barn to form the double garage previously approved under Planning App. ref: PL/2021/09152 | Pending |

b. There were no planning applications received after 15 March 2023.

c. It was noted that this Planning application PL/2022/01367 was approved, subject to conditions, at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023 and that Cllr. Scott represented the Parish Council at that meeting. He observed that considerable weight was placed by the Planning Committee on whether 'Harm' was likely to result from the development and this feature appeared key to their decision-making. He suggested that a further submission be made by the Parish Council addressing 'Harm' in respect of planning application PL/2022/09397. The Council **resolved** to agree to this suggestion and Cllr. Scott agreed to draft an appropriate response.

The Clerk drew the Council's attention to the Wiltshire Council Briefing Note 23-08 entitled Reforms to National Planning Policy. This Briefing Note represented Wiltshire Council's response to the proposed policy changes to the National Planning Policy.

d. In respect of the correspondence received from Ashford Homes, the Chairman stated that the Neighbourhood Plan would address the possible development proposed by Ashford Homes at Church Street and the Neighbourhood Plan Community event planned for 22 April would also provide an opportunity to garner comments regarding this and three other possible developments from members of the public. Cllr. Scott agreed to draft a response to Ashford Homes.

e. There was no further discussion in relation to the Greenacres site except a query whether a business was being undertaken on the site which would be contrary to the planning permission granted..

11. Finance.

a. The Clerk gave a brief financial report, and the Council noted the following financial position:

Lloyds A/C 2149025

| | | |
|--|---|------------------|
| Bank Statement | £ | 61,616.82 |
| 31 January 2023 | | |
| Cheques 1087 (£100) & 1096 (£19.94) not paid (Paid in February) | | |
| Total: | £ | 61,616.82 |

1427

Credits (1 February 2023 to 28 February 2023):

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|
| Wiltshire CIL (19/07938) | £ | 14,162.21 |
| Total: | £ | 14,162.21 |

Debits (1 February 2023 to 28 February 2023):

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Clerk's Salary (February) | £ | 311.16 |
| Clerk's Expenses (January) | £ | 18.21 |
| Rotary Club (Stop Polio) | £ | 100.00 |
| L Callaghan (Planters) | £ | 19.94 |
| Village Hall Hire | £ | 154.00 |
| FSM Payment | £ | 500.00 |
| HMRC PAYE Month 11 | £ | 207.60 |
| V Bodman | £ | 18.40 |
| SLCC Membership | £ | 139.00 |
| Total: | £ | 1,468.31 |

Balance at 28 February 2023:

£ 74,310.72

Credits (1 March 2023 to 22 March 2023):

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Groundwork UK (NP Grant) | £ | 3,663.00 |
| Total: | £ | 3,663.00 |

Debits (1 March 2023 to 22 March 2023):

| | | |
|--|---|---------------|
| Wiltshire Council (Road Markings) - PC Share | £ | 250.00 |
| CPRE Subscription | £ | 36.00 |
| Parish Noticeboard Co. Ltd. | £ | 549.00 |
| Total: | £ | 835.00 |

Balance at 22 March 2023:

£ 77,138.72

Lloyds A/C 7754288

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----------|
| Bank Statement 31-Jan-23 | £ | 7,734.89 |
|-----------------------------|---|----------|

Credits

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|---|------|
| 09-Feb-23 | Interest | £ | 3.94 |
| 17-Feb-23 | HMCTS | £ | 1.16 |
| 09-Mar-23 | Interest | £ | 3.65 |
| 17-Mar-23 | HMCTS (Approx) | £ | 1.16 |

| | | |
|--|--------|---------------|
| | Total: | £ 9.91 |
| Debits | | |
| None | | £ - |
| | | £ - |
| Balance at 22 March 2023: | | £ 7,744.80 |
| Total Balance in Hand at 22 March 2023: | | £ 84,883.52 |
| Payments to be authorised (22 March 2023) | | |
| Clerk's Salary (March) | £ | 311.16 |
| Clerk's HMRC PAYE (Month 12) | £ | 207.60 |
| Clerk's Expenses (February) | £ | 34.14 |
| | £ | 552.90 |

The Clerk stated that the further grant of £3663 had been received from Groundwork UK in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan Project.

- b. The Community Development Fund Working Group (CDFWG) confirmed that a new application for funding had been received.
- c. The Council **resolved** that the Clerk is to transfer funds from the Treasurer's Account to the Business (Reserve) Account to take advantage of the improved interest rates.
- d. The Council **resolved** to make the payments shown under 'Payments to be authorised' above at Agenda item 11a including payments of £250 to Wiltshire Council (Road Markings), £549 Deposit to Parish Noticeboards Co. and £300 to S Stainer (Coronation Flowers).

12. Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr. Smith reported on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NHPSG). He presented details of possible development sites within the village and stated that the next Village Consultation is to be held on 22 April 2023 at the Village Hall. He added that comments received from the public will be central to the subsequent content of the Neighbourhood Plan.

13. Date of the next meeting.

The Council noted that the next Ordinary Parish Council meeting would be held on Wednesday 19 April 2023 commencing at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 10.37pm.